

## REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE

### *Allowable Subject Matter*

1. Claims 1-3, 6-12, 15-16 are allowed.
2. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:
3. The *disclosed* invention seeks to bring together people with similar preferences in a product or product type. The invention will help people find a "virtual space" where participants can discuss and communicate among other people who share their preference in a product. For example, people who prefer a particular cell phone or cell phones in general can join a "virtual space" (a chatroom, email list, online forum, etc.) having that phone/phones as a topic. It is noted that users can explicitly state their "interest" in products [PGPub 0103, 0041, fig 5]. The invention also considers a user's "preference level" which is determined by tracking and collecting data concerning the user's interaction with the icons – set out, time icon moved, last save of icon, position of icon, etc [PGPub 0042-0044]. This collection of preference data is used to calculate/determine a user's "preference level" [PGPub 0043, 0120, 0130, 0133, 0139]. The central terminal's table is shown to include (figure 5) that a single product with a single user "interest" is linked to 10 values of preference level and that each of these 10 levels refers to 10 different virtual space identifiers.
4. The *claimed* invention includes various versions of an association between a "level of similarity in user preference" and a virtual space identifier indicating a virtual

Art Unit: 3622

space where the user can engage in communications about the product with similar users. This is present in each claim. In addition at least claims 6, 10, 11 include the claimed features of preference data including positional information. US 6,525,747 (Bezos) teaches in FIG 1 a website page about a product where the user can click a button/link in order to join a discussion about that displayed product. Other product pages have similar discussion links. US 6,525,747 (Bezos) therefore has an index of products vs. product-discussion areas/spaces. However applicant claims a table [see figure 5 of invention] which includes this list of virtual space identifiers as well as "levels of similarity in preference of users towards the [product]". This is the preference level (from 1 to 10) shown in the table. The user's preference level towards a product is determined/measured/calculated and this is used to determine one of several product-specific virtual spaces, as laid out in the table. Neither this nor the positional preference data is in or rendered obvious by Bezos US 6,525,747 or in the cited art.

5. Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Jeffrey D. Carlson whose telephone number is 571-272-6716. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Fridays; off alternate Fridays.

Art Unit: 3622

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Eric Stamber can be reached on (571)272-6724. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

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